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## Department of Ecology News Release - June 29, 2011

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# Boeing fined \$102,000 for Duwamish fuel spill

OLYMPIA – The Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology) has fined The Boeing Company (Boeing) \$102,000 for spilling an estimated 300 gallons of jet fuel into the Duwamish Waterway in Seattle last year.

The spill occurred May 28, 2010, at a Boeing fuel terminal in south Seattle near the waterway. A tank truck was delivering jet fuel to an aboveground storage tank at the Boeing terminal. A terminal operator heard and smelled leaking fuel and immediately stopped the delivery.

At the time – the Friday evening of the 2010 Memorial Day weekend – Boeing staff believed a large stormwater vault had contained the spill on the company’s property and the fuel had not entered the Duwamish. On Tuesday morning, however, the company realized fuel had reached the waterway, and reported the spill to Ecology and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Washington law and the facility’s water quality permit issued by Ecology require immediate reporting of oil spills – including spills to stormwater systems – to state and federal authorities.

Meanwhile, on Saturday, May 29, 2010, Ecology and the Coast Guard received citizen reports of oil in the Duwamish. State and federal responders found oil in the mouth of Slip 4, a Duwamish inlet several dozen yards downstream from the Boeing facility. The Coast Guard hired a cleanup contractor, but the oil had spread out on the water into a coating too thin for cleanup.

Ecology later matched oil samples from the river and from the Boeing facility to identify the Friday night incident as the source of the oil seen Saturday on the waterway.

Besides the penalty, Ecology also billed Boeing \$5,500 to recover the state’s costs for conducting the spill cleanup and investigation.

“This incident highlights why spillers must immediately report all oil spills to state and federal authorities, even if a spill seems contained,” said Dale Jensen, who manages Ecology’s spill prevention, preparedness and response program, “Since the spill wasn’t reported to us quickly, we lost any opportunity to mount a rapid, aggressive and well-coordinated response to protect the environment.”

During the May 28 fuel delivery, company staff found an open three-quarter-inch maintenance valve that should have been closed. Some incoming jet fuel flowed through the open valve into a 19,000-gallon underground stormwater vault. The vault empties into an oil-water separator that discharges to the stormwater system.

Besides the open valve, an automatic pump that empties the vault was left on – even though the company’s oil spill prevention plan requires that power be off during fuel deliveries.

Workers closed the valve and cut power to the pump.

Boeing staff then checked for oil in catch basins along part of the storm line. Since they saw no signs of oil, they resumed the fuel delivery. However, staff on scene did not know that one catch basin contained a special filter that – unless removed – blocked a view of the water in the storm drain.

On Tuesday morning, June 1, 2010, Boeing contacted Ecology and the Coast Guard to report finding oil at the riverbank around the storm drain outfall – three days after the spill occurred.

Ecology’s Jensen said, “Once they determined what happened, Boeing cooperated fully with our investigation. Unfortunately, there was negligence in failing to check the required settings before the fuel transfer, in the oversights during the first check of the storm drain line, and in not immediately reporting the spill. These factors significantly increased the penalty.”

On realizing the spill had reached the waterway, Boeing placed oil cleanup materials around the outfall. The company then conducted an independent cleanup around the outfall to remove waterway sediments contaminated by the spill and replace them with clean materials.

Boeing estimated that it lost about 6,600 gallons of fuel through the open maintenance valve into the stormwater vault. Approximately 300 gallons discharged into the storm drain and into the Duwamish.

Mary Armstrong, Boeing vice president of Environment, Health and Safety, said: "Once we discovered the spill, Boeing worked with the U.S. Coast Guard, EPA, Ecology and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers to contain and clean up the fuel. We fully restored the shoreline by excavating the contaminated sediment and soil, and replaced it with clean sand. We removed more than 30 creosote-coated pilings and additional riprap, and created an intertidal habitat that looks like a natural shoreline. To ensure that this type of spill won't happen again, Boeing launched a special effort to strengthen reporting procedures and safeguards at all of our fuel tank locations throughout the company."

The company has the right to appeal Ecology's penalty to the Washington State Pollution Control Hearings Board within 30 days.

Spill penalties fund environmental restoration projects in Washington.

Prevention, preparedness, and response to fuel and other oil spills are parts of Ecology's commitment to protect against toxic threats to people and the environment and to meet the state's goal of protecting and restoring Puget Sound by 2020.

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**Media Contacts:** Larry Altose, Ecology media relations, 206-920-2600, [larry.altose@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:larry.altose@ecy.wa.gov)

Curt Hart, Ecology media relations, 360-407-6990, [curt.hart@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:curt.hart@ecy.wa.gov)

Cindy N. Glickert, environmental communications, The Boeing Company, 425-237-1095, [cindy.n.glickert@boeing.com](mailto:cindy.n.glickert@boeing.com)

For more information: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/spills.html>. Select "Duwamish Jet Fuel Spill" in the right column under "Hot Topics."

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